

Ad Hoc Committee on Best Practices in Northampton Decision-Making
September 25, 2008 @ 6:30 PM
Human Resources Conference Room, 2nd Floor, Memorial Hall, 240 Main Street

Members Present: Michael Bardsley, Alex Ghiselin, Lisa DiPiano, Jim Palermo, David Narkewicz.

Public: Susan Enz, Ken Mitchell, Fran Volkmann, Lachlan Ziegler (videographer)

Lisa called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and reviewed agenda.

1. Senior Center Forum update: Alex reviewed a meeting that was held between he, David and Fran Volkmann to discuss the scheduled October 8th forum. Fran questioned what the committee's overall strategy was and how a senior citizen-focused public forum fit into it. She suggested another case study looking at a decision-making process that didn't go well and take that apart. Ken expressed that he was checking back in on the process after having attended the May public forum and had expected that the Committee would have begun moving forward on some of the information gathered. Jim expressed his long-held preference for a case-study approach but added that seniors. Lisa suggested backing away from the idea of a forum given the lack of focus and time constraints. (Jim Palermo had to leave at 7:15pm). After further discussion the group reached a consensus to suspend the October 8th forum until further notice.
2. Inreach Working Group: David and Lisa updated the Committee on the work they and Wendy have been engaged in including continuing to collect self-review forms from city boards and committees and several hours of interviews with city officials over two days. The working group would now focus on synthesizing the information, identify themes, and report to the full Committee.
3. Research Update: David reported that the research document had been updated to include Bob's conversations with Vancouver and Portland and posted to the website.
4. Report Working Group: Michael reported that he, Wendy, and Jim were still organizing their first meeting. Their goal would be to formulate an outline, organizing all of the information gathered via forums and reports, and offer some starting points for discussion around final recommendations.

Ken reiterated his concern that the committee needed to move forward with some debate and recommendations and allowing the public to weigh in. Fran agreed with Ken about the public not coming to meetings the need to discuss specific issues and categories of decision-making. Susan also expressed her concerns about changes that needed to be made in the city. Michael expressed his belief that the Committee needs to shift gears from its process-oriented, listening mode to discussing issues and recommendations and begin writing a report. Susan stated that she has enjoyed coming to the meetings and listening and learning about the process.

5. Meadows Forum: Alex reported on his work summarizing the forum and reviewed some of the key findings. He asked if there were additional comments or input on his draft summary. Lisa indicated that she had e-mailed comments. Alex received Wendy's notes yesterday and others were encouraged to provide their comments so his draft could be finalized at the next meeting.
6. New Business: None, but Lisa indicated that she was going to work on a proposal for the next meeting to take up the Smith Overlay as the subject of a public forum.
7. Future Meeting Dates: next meetings: October 8, 2008, October 23, 2008, November 5, 2008, November 19, 2008, December 3, 2008.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by David Narkewicz.